

## Armed Conflict and Contested Memory: A Plea for a Fresh Start in the Politics of Memory in Mozambique

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# **Armed Conflict and Contested Memory**

A Plea for a Fresh Start in the Politics of Memory  
in Mozambique

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## Summary

With the conclusion of the peace treaty in 1992, the civil war raging in Mozambique since 1977 was considered resolved. The agreement nurtured the hope for a transformation of the country into a pacified democracy and a slowly developing market economy. But in 2012, the armed conflict between the former civil war parties FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, Mozambique Liberation Front*), the governing party since the country's independence in 1975, and the opposition party and former rebel organisation RENAMO (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, Mozambican National Resistance*) broke out again. Both conflict parties bear responsibility for this outbreak.

Many explanations are primarily oriented towards (power-)political and economic factors within the two conflict parties involved as well as towards the unequal distribution of opportunities and of participation of the people in Mozambique in economic development. A closer look, however, reveals that the complexity of the violent conflict is not sufficiently captured by this explanation. For the fresh outbreak cannot be attributed solely to significant socio-economic disparities within the country and a political and (rentier) economic marginalisation of the opposition. Rather, the "proto-war" also points to more deep-seated conflicts over memory culture between the adherents of FRELIMO and RENAMO. Memory is contested in Mozambique, the national history is judged in widely different ways: Supporters of both movements cultivate their own respective memories and narratives and derive not only demands for the present from them, but also visions for the future. However, there has so far been hardly any reconciliation of the diverging memories.

As an introduction, this report provides a short historical overview and background analysis of the armed conflicts in Mozambique since the late colonial period until the conclusion of peace in 1992. This is followed by a descriptive analysis of the historical factors and lines of development that led to the current conflict. In a further step, the report examines the root causes and explanatory approaches for this conflict. In doing so, it focuses on the memories rejected by the government and FRELIMO as an important reason for the fresh outbreak of the armed conflict. Against this background, the report examines how deficits in reconciliation and reckoning with the past from a memory culture perspective were able to negatively affect latent conflict constellations and contribute to the outbreak of open, also armed, confrontations. Concretely, this report appeals to German and international political decision makers and development organisations to implement a series of peacebuilding measures in Mozambique, namely in the areas of research, institution building and media work.

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## 1. Armed Conflict, Struggle over the Root Causes

Since 2012, the southeast African country of Mozambique has been shaken by a partly violent conflict – largely without attracting wider international media attention. The Mozambican government tries to downplay the dimensions of this regionally limited “proto-war” (a militarily and geographically limited armed conflict) and avoids the label “war” (Morier-Genoud 2017a). The conflict parties are the governing party FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* or Mozambique Liberation Front), which has formed the government without interruption since 1975, and the opposition party RENAMO (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* or Mozambican National Resistance). The two parties already waged a civil war against one another from 1977 until 1992, which can be interpreted as a proxy war of the East-West conflict (Newitt 1995; 2017). With the conclusion of the peace treaty in 1992, the civil war was regarded as resolved and Mozambique’s transformation towards a pacified, partly free democracy (Abramowitz 2018) as initiated. The fresh outbreak of conflict thus came as a surprise to many observers. Many arduous, also international rounds of negotiations have so far not been able to finally resolve the armed conflict. A ceasefire concluded in 2014 was already broken in early 2015. From August 2016 onwards, the failure of further peace talks resulted in intensified guerrilla attacks by RENAMO on government institutions and infrastructure. Among other things, RENAMO demanded the transfer of control over central and northern provinces of Mozambique, its strongholds. These confrontations led to refugee movements (Buchanan 2016). While a ceasefire has been in place between RENAMO and FRELIMO since December 2016, a resolution of the conflict is still pending. A resumption of fighting by one of the two conflict parties is possible at any given moment (Morier-Genoud 2017a).

The conclusion of peace in the 1990s had raised great hopes at the time that the economically backwards former Portuguese colony governed by authoritarian politics would espouse the model of a liberal democracy and embark on the path of market-oriented socio-economic progress (Francisco 2013; Manning 2008: 52). Indeed, the developments seemed to be positive at first. Soon, however, it became apparent that the economic upturn did not reach large parts of Mozambique’s population. Political opposition groups continued to have limited success. This has primarily affected RENAMO, which has remained caught in the role of the eternal opposition. So far, other political parties have not been able to challenge the governing party FRELIMO in national parliamentary or presidential elections at all, and in elections at the provincial level only to a very limited extent. Especially the socio-economically and infrastructurally marginalised north of the country has benefited from the positive overall economic development only to a limited extent.

Politics and socio-economics alone fall short of explaining the ongoing armed conflict. It is undisputed that political, social and economic marginalisation are the mainsprings for the current conflict. The political and economic factors that have played an essential role for the conflict constellation both historically and presently include (1) the fight over revenue from the exploitation of recently discovered oil and gas resources in the north of

the country, (2) the high economic growth, from which the majority hardly benefits, especially in remote regions, (3) the exclusion of alternative political groupings by FRELIMO, which has also prevented a reckoning with the preceding civil war, (4) the losses of RENAMO and the gains of new parties in previous elections as well as (5) conflicts within the governing party (Morier-Genoud 2017a: 157–158).

This enumeration of the most discussed root causes of the conflict makes it clear that issues of a lack of reconciliation of the population in the wake of the civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO and associated antagonistic memory cultures are considered secondary and are often even overlooked. Frequently, the focus is on purely political-institutional (such as constitutional provisions and alleged irregularities and discrimination in elections resulting in a marginalisation of the political opposition) or economic forms of explanation. A closer look reveals a much greater complexity, as other factors have also contributed to the fresh outbreak of an armed conflict. In the past decades, research and some media have early on examined the reasons for the civil war after independence quite comprehensively, and in doing so they have occasionally pointed to the different cultural and political positions of memory within society and the political sphere. With regard to the country's memory culture, attentive observers are right in noting that there is a lack of institutions for reckoning with the past from a memory culture perspective: "Narratives across the political spectrum diverge radically, but there is no forum in which they can be hashed out and reconciled." (Azevedo-Harman 2015: 147). For a long time, the political sphere and large parts of society in Mozambique have relied on avoidance and not on reckoning with the past and on reconciliation. Especially the government and FRELIMO "tried simply to look away from past misdeeds." (Azevedo-Harman 2015: 147). The disadvantages of such a strategy of avoidance and thus a weak social embedding of latent conflicts are obvious: "Wherever avoidance is dominant as a strategy for dealing with conflicts, it is likely that, when it fails, it will be replaced by destruction" [own translation] (Elwert 2004: 31).

As other post-conflict states show, for instance the negative case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (e.g. Pingel 2008), processing conflicts over memory culture is a very essential dimension for overcoming the consequences of a civil war in a sustainable way. For achieving a permanent peace, this dimension must not be omitted, as it is central for a reconciliation reaching broad segments of the population. In general, (cultural) memory is understood here as an "interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts" (Erll 2008: 2) and, in contrast to related terms such as commemoration and recollection, it refers to dimensions (material, social and mental), levels (individual and collective), objects (what is remembered) and modes (how it is remembered, i.e. for instance religious, political, etc.) (Erll 2008: 3–7).

Comprehensive research on Mozambique from a memory culture perspective does not exist so far. However, the evidence provided in this report<sup>1</sup> indicates that factors related to

1 I thank Sabine Mannitz and Bernhard Moltmann as well as Caroline Fehl, Nina Müller and Antonia Witt for valuable and constructive comments and suggestions.

the politics of memory might indeed have played an important role in the resurgence of the conflict. Reckoning with the past from a memory culture perspective should play a central role in the peace strategies that are required now.

The report argues that this requires a number of efforts: (1) more research, as basic, systematic qualitative evaluations and analyses of the different historical narratives of memory culture in Mozambique are still lacking. How are they negotiated, challenged and sometimes negated in public, in the political sphere and in the media? What actors and groups invoke which respective narrative strands? How can the latter be used constructively as a basis for socio-political visions for the future? (2) It is necessary to build institutions that enable and structure a reckoning with the past from a memory culture perspective. For instance, this includes the option of establishing truth and reconciliation commissions, a transitional justice system or joint school book commissions of FRELIMO and RENAMO. Such measures could be promoted and accompanied by local and international organisations or supranational institutions such as UNECSO. (3) At the media level, it is necessary to deal with the different, heterogeneous memory cultures relevant to the conflict within the Mozambican population.

Against this background, the report (1) will first take a look at the more recent Mozambican history. Here, the focus will be on structural social and political circumstances and developments since the late colonial period. This section will also examine the causes of the country's heterogeneous memory culture. In a second step, I will (2) then describe and analyse the course of the current conflict. Here, the focus will be on evidence and contents of diverging memory cultures – only fragmentarily investigated so far – as well as the question of how they have contributed to the outbreak of the ongoing conflict. Finally, I will (3) discuss in this report whether and how deficits in reconciliation and reckoning with the past from a memory culture perspective impact on latent conflict constellations at the micro and meso level in Mozambique. A “bottom-up” perspective could contribute to ensuring that in addition to politics and media, also and especially the memory culture perspectives of different segments of the Mozambican population are taken into account, in order to thus better understand the root causes of the conflict and to point out a path to a peaceful and permanent solution of the conflict. In a concluding chapter (4), the report will provide a summary and also sketch preliminary ideas on how the current conflict could be resolved sustainably, in a nation-building process inclusive of memory cultures.



## **2. Traditions of Unresolved Conflicts and Violent Attempts at Resolution**

### **2.1 Anti-colonial Liberation Struggle**

Mozambique, located in the southeast of the African continent, with its approximately 800,000 square kilometres and a population of currently around 28 million, heterogeneous with respect to religion and ethnicity – Makua, Tsonga, Yao, Makonde and Swahili form the largest ethnic groups; in addition to Christians of different churches, Muslims and followers of local religions live in the country – is one of the poorest states in the world (cf. UNCTADA 2016; UNDP 2016). Swaziland, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania are immediate neighbours.

The current conflict, which broke out unexpectedly, is part of a series of armed confrontations that have shaken the country since the 1960s. Just like other Portuguese colonies in Africa (Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cap Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe), Mozambique is characterised by a repressive, authoritarian and centralist political, social and economic system – also compared to colonies of other colonial powers (cf. Newitt 2002; 2017). One cause for this is the fact that the “mother country” Portugal itself, in contrast to the United Kingdom or France, for example, only became a democracy in 1974. Like Angola, Mozambique, too, was a settler colony (until independence, Portugal promoted the settlement of several hundred thousands of Portuguese in the country), which went hand in hand with racism and discrimination targeting the African majority population in everyday life, in the education system and in professional life.

Today’s Mozambique is of colonial origin, and since the late 19th century it unites areas that had never formed a political unit before (Newitt 2017: 1). The systematic colonial appropriation of the territory was carried out against native resistance. Already at that time, a course was set that shapes Mozambique until today and also affects the outbreak of the most recent conflict. This includes the location of the by far largest urban settlement, the capital Maputo, in the extreme south of the country. From there, the regions in the centre and the north of the country are still difficult to reach, sometimes even isolated. In addition, the colonial transport infrastructure planning, which aimed at transporting goods between the landlocked African colonies, linked the remote hinterland more closely to the neighbouring states of Zimbabwe and Malawi than to the capital. Accordingly, the capital and its surroundings and a few cities along the coast almost exclusively benefited from the economic upturn and modernisation. In view of the discrimination against the African population, Portuguese settlers and professionals became indispensable for the positive economic development of Mozambique (Newitt 1995; 2002; 2017; Pélissier 1984).

The leftist liberation movement FRELIMO, founded in 1962 under the leadership of Eduardo Mondlane, was originally characterised by in-fighting. Under the new president Samora Machel, it gained some inner unity from 1969 onwards. However, the leadership team was not representative of the country: Many hailed from the south of Mozambique;

in addition to intellectuals and poets, whites and mestizos, some Goans, whose ancestors hailed from Portuguese India, were represented in the party leadership. Despite this lack of representativity of its leadership team but thanks to its growing inner cohesion, FRELIMO, with the help of friendly governments, was able to take up the fight against the Portuguese colonial regime from 1964 onwards. This war focused on the north and the centre of the country.

The struggle against the discriminatory colonial regime characterised by violence still constitutes a unifying element, both in the politically imposed memory and in the memory of large parts of the population. However, this does not apply to the developments since independence.

## 2.2 Independence and Civil War

After the end of the anti-colonial liberation war and in the wake of the Lusaka Treaty between FRELIMO and the second provisional government of Portugal from September 1974, Mozambique gained its independence in June 1975. Like in other former Portuguese colonies (e.g. Angola and Guinea-Bissau), the new state emerged from the battle-hardened liberation movement transformed into a political party. FRELIMO became a unity party with a communist programme. At that time, more than ever, educated Mozambicans from the capital region as well as non-Africans dominated the FRELIMO leadership under the charismatic first state president Samora Machel. After the withdrawal of the Portuguese, FRELIMO had to rely on the local middle class from the previous colonial administration that often had an ambivalent relationship to the new government. FRELIMO acted under the banner of anti-colonialism and the elimination of exclusion and injustice. It demanded the country's own national Mozambican path beyond colonial exploitation. It collectivised and nationalised the economy, relied on reeducation and politicisation in order to make the vehemently proclaimed utopia of a better world a reality. Reality, however, soon exposed the downsides: Economic decline, autocratic tendencies, top-down nation-building, forced labour and dependence on foreign countries including apartheid South Africa counteracted Samora Machel's vociferous rhetoric of progress and self-determination. In addition, there were a tiring and ultimately counterproductive permanent mass mobilisation for a new society and against "enemies" suspected in many places (traditional authorities, the religious communities, former members of the Portuguese colonial army, etc.), an ineffective centrally planned economy, severe economic difficulties and shortages, a radical modernisation policy targeting structures and institutions discredited as "traditional" and backwards, as well as policies neglecting rural socio-economic interests. As a result, large parts of the population were alienated from the government and FRELIMO and turned away. It proved to be fatal that the foundation of collectivised villages, which drew on the Tanzanian concept of Ujamaa, (unintentionally) resembled the Portuguese forced settling of rural residents in so-called *aldeamentos* (village settlements) during the war of independence. Like the Portuguese colonial regime, FRELIMO as party and state in one also relied on repression and coercion. Political pluralism or regional autonomy were not

envisioned – no more than free elections or the guarantee of civil liberties. Parts of the population were deliberately excluded from political participation (Cahen in Guilengue 2016; Newitt 1995; 2002; 2017; Orre 2010: 216–340; Rupiya 1998; Sengulane/Gonçalves 1998: 28; Sumich 2012: 137).

There was a lack of legal channels for voicing criticism of the policies in a peaceful way, for correcting political mistakes made by the state and party and for opposition work against the government's measures (Cahen in Guilengue 2016). Growing dissatisfaction in parts of the population as well as the (Southern) Rhodesian<sup>2</sup> and South African geopolitical interest in curbing communist tendencies led to the founding of RENAMO in 1975. First, it was led by the FRELIMO dissident André Matsangaissa. In view of the widespread dissatisfaction, rural Mozambique in particular provided fertile ground for the founding of RENAMO, driven by the white minority regime in (Southern) Rhodesia. At first, the resistance against autocratically decreed innovations therefore had a regional and ethnic character. In the beginning, RENAMO only attacked from Rhodesia and later South Africa. The conflict starting now between the FRELIMO government and RENAMO also acquired the character of a proxy war in the context of the East-West conflict. While states of the Eastern bloc and many African states such as Zimbabwe and Tanzania supported FRELIMO, (Southern) Rhodesia, South Africa, the United States and other Western countries backed RENAMO. The result was a civil war waged by RENAMO in a bloody and brutal manner, which mainly affected the centre and the north of the country, caused migration and suffering, led to the destruction of infrastructure and accelerated the economic decline. RENAMO was infamous for its human rights violations against civilians. Forced recruitments were part of its strategy. However, RENAMO's internal organisation was (and is) even more undemocratic than that of FRELIMO, as its long-term leader Afonso Dhlakama has been making all decisions since 1980. While it was reviled by FRELIMO as a foreign terror group maintained by the white minority regimes and lacking any backing within Mozambique, RENAMO was actually initially welcomed as a liberator by many rural residents. The bulk of the RENAMO members hailed from the rural centre of the country, where large parts of the population were dissatisfied with the preceding resettlements, the neglect of small-scale agriculture as well as the persecution and oppression of traditional authorities, religions, practices etc. In fact, local rivalries and feuds were superimposed on the conflict between FRELIMO and RENAMO, which the latter deliberately exploited for its goals. In the eyes of FRELIMO, RENAMO pursued an anti-modernist agenda; the governing party's own mistakes were consciously ignored.

With FRELIMO growing closer to South Africa from the mid-eighties onwards (e.g. through the Nkomati Accord of 1984, which was largely ineffective but formed a

2 In 1965, the white minority regime unilaterally declared the British colony of Southern Rhodesia independent. The British government adhered to the name Southern Rhodesia, whereas the separatists called the state Rhodesia. In 1980, after free and universal elections, the country gained internationally recognised independence as Zimbabwe.

milestone), RENAMO increasingly had to stand on its own feet and act from bases within Mozambique. Instead of relying on the destruction of infrastructure, RENAMO shifted to permanently occupying territory and was thus able to conquer significant areas in the centre of Mozambique and put pressure on the government. As a consequence, many government institutions outside the capital were often hardly functioning or present anymore. Only in 1987 did RENAMO outline a party programme, which demanded *inter alia* the restoration of religious freedom and the rehabilitation of traditional authorities. Only since then has RENAMO entered strategic alliances with traditional authorities and rural religious groupings in order to establish a sustainable stable support base and to sharpen its profile as an advocate of the oppressed and marginalised (Andersson 1992; Bertelsen 2003; Cahen in Guilengue 2016; Cabrita 2000; Emerson 2014; Gonçalves 1998; Newitt 1995; 2002; Orre 2010: 216–340; Rupiya 1998; Sumich 2012: 138; Vines 2013).

### 2.3 Rapprochement and Conclusion of Peace

The policies of the governing FRELIMO as well as RENAMO's resistance, viewed as legitimate by parts of the population, laid the foundation for a strongly heterogeneous, even antagonistic memory culture that characterises Mozambique until today. Yet, the political rapprochement of the two conflict parties from the late eighties onwards could certainly have entailed a rapprochement in terms of memory culture. All parties involved, but not least FRELIMO with its orientation towards a long-term consolidation of power, are to blame for the fact that this opportunity was wasted.

Opportunities for a lasting pacification were created by a series of factors: The end of the Cold War and apartheid, the dissociation of the US from RENAMO and the political and economic convergence of Mozambique with Western states and international organisations (accession to the World Bank, to the International Monetary Fund and the Lomé Convention in 1984), as well as the fact that the conflict between FRELIMO and RENAMO had led to a dead end, induced a fundamental change. Since the late 1980s, Mozambique underwent a neoliberal structural adjustment. In 1990, the FRELIMO government introduced reforms for opening not only the economy, but also the political system. In 1992, a General Peace Agreement, which also provided for demobilisation and reintegration programmes for former combatants under the supervision of a UN mission, was concluded in Rome due to Western pressure (Acordo Gera de Paz, AGB) (The Rome Process: General Peace Agreement for Mozambique 1998). However, a real reconciliation between the previous conflict parties did not take place. The agreement also did not provide for a mechanism for creating institutions for a sustainable reckoning with the war and the rights violations committed in its course. Although the agreement remained imprecise in many ways, it led to the cessation of hostilities, to demobilisation and to the holding of the first free elections under international (UN) supervision in 1994 (Emerson 2014; Gonçalves 1998; Newitt 2002; Rupiya 1998; Vines 2013). With the introduction of multiparty democracy, the conclusion of peace with RENAMO guaranteed a long-term consolidation of the political hegemony of FRELIMO: The 1994 parliamentary and presidential elections brought a victory for FRELIMO and a confirmation of the state

president from its ranks, Joaquim Chissano (term of office: 1986–2005). However, RENAMO, transformed into a party, was able to triumph in five of the eleven provinces in the centre and north of the country – to the surprise of many, in view of the atrocities committed in the past. Compared to FRELIMO, the RENAMO members of parliament were characterised by a lower level of education. However, RENAMO had succeeded in attracting new supporters who were not involved in the war. The following years brought further economic reforms such as privatisations, which resulted in a huge economic upturn. However, this was and is only to the benefit of a minority, whereas the health and education system – formerly priority issues of FRELIMO – were neglected. A constitutional change in 1997 granted the municipalities a certain degree of autonomy. However, FRELIMO shied away from a full decentralisation since it feared electoral victories of RENAMO; the Mozambican administrative system thus remained strongly centralised. The 1999 elections consolidated the results from 1994, with gains for RENAMO. After independence, FRELIMO had been hostile towards and dismissive of traditional authorities, cultural traditions and local worldviews. Now, it copied RENAMO's strategy and tried to build alliances with traditional authorities and present itself as the protector of their traditions (Bertelsen 2003; Emerson 2014; Francisco 2013; Newitt 2002; 2017; Orre 2010: 216–340; Vines 2013; Weimer/Carillho 2017).

In contrast to Rwanda, South Africa or Sierra Leone, for example, which also had to overcome long-standing, deep-seated conflicts, the peaceful transformation resulted neither in the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission and/or another institutionalised form of processing memories and historical narratives, nor in the creation of a transitional justice system and/or a community-based jurisdiction at the local level. Although these institutions were criticised and numerous flaws in carrying out justice and reconciliation work were pointed out (Barria/Roper 2005; Sesay 2007; Clark 2012; Donlon 2013; Brehm et al. 2014), they still opened up channels for achieving at least some degree of reconciliation. Mozambique, however, embarked on a different path, similar to Angola's. There, opposing narratives of memory stand irreconcilable and unreconciled, after the government achieved peace through victory over the rebel movement in 2002 and consequently explicitly rejected a truth and reconciliation commission (Pedro 2007: 123).

### **3. After the War is before the War?**

#### **Lost Opportunities in the new Millennium**

At the turn of the millennium, peace in Mozambique seemed permanently secured. Formal democratic rules of the game were largely being adhered to. And all this without the former conflict parties having involved their supporters and the overall population in an open conversation about past injustice, having reckoned with the civil war or having apologised – and also without having critically examined their own respective essential historical narratives – unless one counts exceptions such as FRELIMO's rethinking of its attitude towards traditional authorities, religion etc. From a historical viewpoint, this

arrangement of dealing with the past, which reminds of the problematic case of Rwanda (Buckley-Zistel 2006) – and that is endorsed by a minority of publicists (Rieff 2016) – may be understandable:

“I suspect that Mozambique’s way of adjusting to the violence of the civil war – just mention it as little as possible – emerged as the simplest way of moving ahead at a vital stage of the peace negotiations. It was not theorised but was an ad hoc arrangement. [...] However, the danger of this Mozambican policy of ‘forgetting’ is clear. It removes the threat of establishing any accountability for criminal acts in the political arena.” (Newitt in Guilengue 2017)

Moreover, this avoidance of a reconciliation process and thus potentially of a convergence of not only diverging but in essential aspects even fundamentally opposing memory cultures contributed little to closing the remaining societal rifts and to sustainably steering the previously armed conflict towards a peaceful course. Thus, contrary versions of history and memory narratives used as “weapons” continued to coexist without being negotiated. Until today, “silence is regarded as instrumental to achieving peace” (Igreja 2008: 539). There has been hardly any negotiating of an integrative memory culture that could have contributed to a sustainable, peaceful way of dealing with the conflict and thus to integrative, bottom-up nation-building. Only to a very insufficient extent has the preceding political conflict been translated into conflicts of memory and rendered fruitful for future national compromise and reconciliation. Thus, opportunities were lost for drawing on conflicts of memory for shaping a nuanced and thus integrative memory culture.

In the first century of the new millennium it became clear that FRELIMO used state institutions and media for its purposes in order to win elections. The tendency to marginalise other parties even increased under the new state president from the ranks of FRELIMO, Armando Guebuza (term of office: 2005–2015). For “there has been little attempt by Frelimo to co-opt and incorporate individual Renamo figures into the ruling elite” (Newitt in Guilengue 2017). In addition, there were electoral irregularities and unequal provision of resources, which gave a clear advantage to FRELIMO. For good reason, many citizens continue to equate state and FRELIMO party even after the multi-party system was introduced. RENAMO did not display an increased tendency towards democratic practices, either. They and their leader responded to diminishing electoral successes with guerrilla rhetoric. Their leader Dhlakama repeatedly voiced threats of separatism and boycotts. At the same time, he and RENAMO stuck to a rhetoric displaying a lack of willingness to reconcile and an insistence on obsolete positions from the founding period of the movement – for instance, Dhlakama calling FRELIMO “communists” and “Marxists” and, in the same breath, portraying RENAMO as “father” and “guardian” of democracy (cited in Vines 2013: 386). At the same time, RENAMO paints a one-sided picture and tries to cast itself as a victim of FRELIMO and its (alleged) electoral fraud. Regular changes in the electoral system as well as political blockades in the wake of elections bear witness that, while Mozambique is structurally democratised, the political culture still has autocratic and paternalistic traits. For twenty years already, RENAMO has unsuccessfully been demanding an effective decentralisation of the country and a revision of the constitution with its “winner takes all” principle. RENAMO did repeatedly gain majorities in the parliaments of several provinces. However, the

constitution stipulates that the provincial governors, who in reality wield more power than the representatives of the people, are appointed by the government. Therefore, the provinces in which RENAMO holds the majority of the parliamentary seats are nevertheless ruled by governors with FRELIMO party membership. FRELIMO did not react to RENAMO's demands to change this, any more than to RENAMO's offers of talks for cooperation. Corresponding bills by the opposition were quashed by FRELIMO with its majority in the national parliament. In order to differentiate itself from RENAMO, FRELIMO still portrays itself as the party of national unity. In fact, FRELIMO does have members from all ethnic groups and religions. Everyday life is shared in a largely peaceful way by the different ethnic groups and religions in the country despite differences in culture and identity. Besides RENAMO, a further party is affected by the structural discrimination: the MDM (*Movimento Democrático de Moçambique* or Democratic Movement of Mozambique), whose founders in 2009 included RENAMO renegades (Azevedo-Harman 2015: 140–46, 148; Bertelsen 2003: 268, Cahen in Guilengue 2016; Cortès 2016: 2–3, 5; Guilengue 2017; Manning 2008: 43–71; Vines 2013).

### 3.1 Old Opponents, New Conflict

In early 2012, the political situation in Mozambique escalated and caused a deep break in the usually mostly nonviolent way the conflict between the FRELIMO government and RENAMO had been dealt with. The reasons included the long-standing demands of the internally divided RENAMO for (personal and financial) participation in the recently discovered natural gas resources, the acceptance of more RENAMO veterans into the army and a reform of the electoral system. However, FRELIMO's government majority did not react to the demand. In early March 2012, armed confrontations broke out in front of a provincial party headquarters between the riot police on one side and around 300 former RENAMO fighters as well as Dhlakama's "presidential guard", which remains under arms, on the other. Despite subsequent negotiations, the RENAMO leader threatened to prepare for a new war (Azevedo-Harman 2015; Cortès 2016; Vines 2013).

A further aggravation of the conflict occurred about one year later, in April 2013, when the Rapid Reaction Force attacked a RENAMO office in the centre of the country with weapons of war and gas grenades. Subsequently, RENAMO fighters attacked a police station and the most important road linking the north to the south of the country. RENAMO stuck to the practice of concentrating attacks on this main road until October 2013, when the government started an offensive with the goal of arresting Dhlakama. However, he was able to escape in time, whereupon the government had party offices in other cities and the homes of Dhlakama and his family searched. In response, RENAMO extended its attacks on means of transport, barracks and international companies in the north of the country to a larger area. These attacks, however, veil the fact that RENAMO – in contrast to the well-equipped government units – can only draw on relatively few, elderly fighters and does not have sufficient equipment at its disposal. As a result of the incidents of October 2013, RENAMO expanded its list of demands: reform of the electoral system, the electoral commission and the electoral secretariat; municipal

elections, reform of the armed forces, a “de-partyfication” of the state directed at FRELIMO as well as an administration of the natural resources (Azevedo-Harman 2015; Cortês 2016; Morier-Genoud 2017a).

In January 2014, RENAMO started attacks again, now also including the provinces in the South that had so far been spared. With the help of national, independent civil society actors and through numerous negotiation rounds, an agreement on the cessation of hostilities was reached in August 2014. The outgoing President Guebuza was able to portray himself as a peace broker, while the agreement enabled his opponent Dhlakama to start his campaign for the impending elections. The latter were characterised by fraud and the use of violence on both sides. While RENAMO had been losing votes continuously since the 2004 elections, it was able to return to its 1999 level in 2014. By contrast, the MDM succeeded especially in the capital as well as in the central and northern provinces. The former FRELIMO minister Filipe Nyusi, who was seen as a compromise candidate by Guezeba’s grace, was elected successor of state president Guebuza. Since entering office, however, Nyusi has gained some profile of his own. Nyusi is the first president who did not take part in the war of independence; he thus belongs to a new generation of FRELIMO politicians. Both opposition parties refused to recognise the election result; Nyusi was nevertheless sworn into office in January 2015. In February 2015, he succeeded in reaching an agreement in negotiations with Dhlakama that provided for a decentralisation of Mozambique and a transfer of power to RENAMO in the provinces in which they had been victorious. A split in FRELIMO – also along generational lines – became apparent when its leadership board and parliamentary group surprisingly rejected the agreement in April. It remained controversial whether Nyusi had been playing a double game or had been betrayed by his own people. In September, RENAMO escalated the armed conflict especially in the north and centre, after Dhlakama’s home in the second largest city Beira had been surrounded by police. Rumours were flaring up of an attempted murder. After targeted killings of RENAMO members, RENAMO and others also alleged the existence of death squads associated with FRELIMO. This in turn led to the assassination of FRELIMO party members by RENAMO fighters. Despite new negotiations, by the end of 2016 RENAMO extended its attacks to all provinces of the country except for those in the extreme north and south, including the capital Maputo. Subsequently, the government sent police and military units, allegedly receiving help (army troops and military equipment) from Zimbabwe and China (Azevedo-Harman 2015; Cortês 2016; Morier-Genoud 2017a; Pereira 2016).

### **3.2 Reshuffling the Deck**

In early 2016, the constellation in Mozambique changed fundamentally when it became known that the former state president Guebuza and his finance minister had left hitherto unknown public debts of more than 2 billion US dollars (dos Santos 2016; Morier-Genoud 2017a). The International Monetary Fund and the most important donors subsequently withdrew, which put the government in Maputo under pressure. The national mediators (four members of the clergy and a university rector) in the conflict negotiations were



replaced by international ones (sent by the European Union, the Vatican and the *Global Leadership Foundation*). The topics were also adjusted: cessation of hostilities; governmental power for RENAMO in the six provinces in which it had reached a majority in the 2014 elections; establishment of nonpartisan security organs and disarming and reintegration of the RENAMO fighters. Yet again, FRELIMO prevented an agreement that it had first supported. Not least, the government feared that, in taking over the government in the central provinces, RENAMO would gain access to natural gas that would be conducted from the north to the south in the future. In December 2016, Dhlakama proclaimed a truce for the Christmas period, which he extended until February in early January 2017. After another widely expected unilateral extension by sixty days in early March 2017, Dhlakama proclaimed an indefinite unilateral ceasefire on May 4, 2017, which has remained in place since. Already in late April, president Nyusi had announced a withdrawal of the army from positions near Dhlakama's headquarters in the mountains of Gorongosa. Rounds of negotiations mediated by national actors as well as direct talks between Nyusi and Dhlakama have set the tone since then. Evidently, the ongoing financial scandal, which is affecting ever broader circles and apparently also included secret weapon purchases, and the resulting empty coffers are increasingly putting the government under pressure to negotiate and are making concessions necessary. The scandal prompted the group of the fourteen budget supporters (World Bank, African Development Bank, EU, United Kingdom, Austria, France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland and Finland) as well as Japan and the United States to end their direct budgetary aid (Agência de Informação de Moçambique 2016; dos Santos 2016; Morier-Genoud 2017a; Africa Research Bulletin 2017a; Africa Research Bulletin 2017b; Pereira 2016; Africa Confidential 2017a; Africa Confidential 2017b).

A new "front line" that opened up in October 2017 shows how fragile the political situation is in Mozambique: On October 5, about thirty armed suspected Islamists attacked a police station in a town in the Muslim, poverty-stricken extreme north of the country. They killed police officers and occupied the town until the government security forces were able to bring the situation back under control. On October 4, the mayor of the country's third biggest city, Nampula, who belonged to the opposition party MDM but was alienated from his party, had been shot dead during a public ceremony commemorating the signing of the 1992 peace agreement (Morier-Genoud 2017b; Vines 2017).

## **4. The Current Conflict Viewed from Bottom-up Perspectives of Memory Culture**

### **4.1 Mozambique's Non-Negotiated Conflicts of Memory**

As this outline of the events of the last years makes clear, the root causes of the latent but ongoing conflict can be traced back to political and economic imbalances. A closer look, however, reveals that the root causes are far more complex. Rather, the rifts in Mozambique are considerably deeper than what preceding explanations might have given reason

to assume, for the conflict includes the entire population also beyond the political elite. This fact implies the necessity of opening the bottom-up view for the diversity of memories within the population, which could be drawn upon for an accommodation between different memory cultures.

The perception of the preceding descriptions very much concentrated on a macro perspective from the view of the national political arena, especially from the capital. In addition to the country's politicians, the central players in this arena include diplomats and staff from international institutions of development cooperation. It can be critically questioned whether the following assessment is correct: "The conflict in Mozambique was instigated and led from the top, not the grassroots. In other words, it was a quarrel of elites rather than a matter of ordinary people laying waste to neighbouring villages" (Azevedo-Harman 2015: 147). For RENAMO gained additional votes in the recent elections, which can definitely be interpreted as support for RENAMO's approach by parts of the population. Nevertheless, it is important to contrast "top-down" perspectives of elites with "bottom-up" perspectives of the Mozambican majority population (e.g. Maschietto 2016: 121–127; Schafer 2007: 139–165) in order to document and analyse historical narratives in all their diversity and to apply them for reconciliation work and peacebuilding. The research on memory in Mozambique has so far rather looked at elite discourses, frequently omitting narratives and viewpoints of the majority of the population (e.g. Igreja 2008; 2013; Sumich 2012). Nevertheless, biographical-qualitative studies on the memories of those affected by experiences of violence from the civil war, for instance, are indeed available (e.g. Igreja 2010).

With a focus on a "top-down" perspective, the fact disappears from view that the current conflict is also based on contested memories within the population. For the fresh outbreak of the conflict also points to non-negotiated conflicts of memory between the supporters of FRELIMO and RENAMO – and not only between these, since memory is characterised by many voices also beyond the membership of the two organisations. A peasant in rural Manica who suffered from resettlements by FRELIMO in the late seventies and therefore found himself compelled to side with RENAMO in an act of resistance probably has another view on history than a civil servant in the capital who has been looked after by FRELIMO and the governments it formed. Indeed, e.g. Jason Sumich (2012: 143) makes clear how differently the past is remembered even in families from the urban middle class: While some mentioned the lack of food and a resulting negative solidarity among "have-nots" in the late seventies, others praised the presidency of Samora Machel as a period in which everything was in order and a societal goal existed, with little crime and much solidarity. Just like in other countries, memory is contested in Mozambique – yet, there is a lack of public fora and debates – i.e. institutions – that could contribute to an acknowledgement of different perceptions of history and potentially to an accommodation between these different memories. Such an approach could be the basis for attempting a rapprochement in terms of memory culture.

The outbreak of the conflict in 2012, for which the state and governing party FRELIMO and the former rebel organisation RENAMO bear responsibility, makes the deep rifts that still characterise Mozambican society most obvious. They conceal funda-

mentally different experiences within society. There has never been a comprehensive reckoning with the civil war from 1977 to 1992, so that until today different versions of memory can exist in parallel and thus compete (Igreja 2013: 333). These divisions become apparent e.g. based on historical interpretations of a woman from the Mozambican upper class whose parents were high-ranking FRELIMO members. The derogatory and arrogant manner with which she talks about RENAMO and thus practices a radical othering reflects the attitude of many leading FRELIMO and elite members in a striking way:

“I remember in 1992 when peace was declared and Renamo came out of the bush. They were given houses, at least the big guys in the party were. It was one of the conditions of peace. When they (Renamo) came here they had no idea how to live in a city. They used to wash their clothes and leave them to dry on the front lawn! Can you believe that? These people think they could run a country. It’s a joke; they had never been out of the bush before.” (cited in Sumich 2012: 145)

These rifts between memory cultures and differences in perception – in addition to political and (rentier) economic factors – contributed to the outbreak of the armed conflict. The symbolic level on which antagonistic memory cultures and thus different versions of history encounter each other also has to be taken into account concomitantly. The national history of Mozambique and the political founding fathers of the country continue to be judged in different ways: Especially the constituency and the sympathisers of both political camps cherish their own respective objects and narratives of memory, which they regard as the only authentic ones. While FRELIMO supporters on the one hand honour the socialist-egalitarian ambition for society and their party’s struggle against colonialism and apartheid, RENAMO partisans tend to focus on the memory of rising up against planned economy, one-party rule and socialism. However, it is unclear how the majority of politically unaffiliated Mozambicans position themselves towards history, that is to say, which narrative patterns of memory culture are circulating and dominant, which memory cultures are considered (in)authentic by which segments of the population and how different perceptions are negotiated.

## 4.2 Memory Culture in Postcolonial Contexts

Political founding figures from the early phase of independence who had a lasting impact on society, culture and economy are frequently focal points of the memory culture of postcolonial states – take for example political protagonists such as Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Ahmed Sékou Touré in Guinea, Yomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Léopold Sédar Senghor in Senegal, Agostinho Neto in Angola or Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d’Ivoire. This is not any different in Mozambique: With Samora Machel (1933–1986) and Eduardo Mondlane (1920–1969), Mozambique even has two leaders who have had a lasting impact on the nation- and state-building process. However, as leaders of FRELIMO, the Marxist-Leninist unity party of independent Mozambique from 1975 to 1992, they evoke positive memories only in the memory culture of a part of the population. In population groups and party members that take a critical to hostile stance towards FRELIMO, they evoke negative associations, as is the case not least for RENAMO, but likely also for the MDM. In that sense, Mozambique does not differ significantly from other postcolonial states. In

countries such as Guinea-Bissau (Kohl 2018), Namibia (du Pisani 2007: 104; Melber 2017) or Zimbabwe (Barnes et al. 2016: 329), for example, in which former liberation movements came to power, the interpretation of history is sometimes strongly polarised as the governments formed by the former liberation movements try to subordinate memory to their reading and to repress contrary perceptions in society. The current conflict can thus also be understood as a result of the repression and negation of experiences that do not conform to the official FRELIMO (government) narrative.

As has become apparent, the two biggest political parties still have geographical strongholds, namely RENAMO in the centre of Mozambique, FRELIMO in the rest of the country. In the RENAMO strongholds it becomes most visible how controversial the postcolonial history and thus memory remains until today. For instance, when the RENAMO-led municipal administration named a square after their founder André Matsangaissa in 2007, FRELIMO immediately reversed this move after winning the local elections shortly afterwards (Igreja 2013). Perhaps Matsangaissa (1950–1979) was an affront to FRELIMO also because he had been excluded from FRELIMO several years before his rise to RENAMO's leadership. It is still the FRELIMO founding figures of independent Mozambique, Eduardo Mondlane and Samora Machel, after whom many streets, squares, schools and educational institutions etc. are named and to whom monuments are dedicated in Mozambique. For both Mondlane and Machel have had a lasting impact on FRELIMO and independent Mozambique and became tragic heroes and victims through their early death. Accordingly, they have enjoyed and continue to enjoy great significance in the official government and FRELIMO memory. At the same time, however, this officially offered version of memory, produced and promoted by the state and governing party, provoked dissent. The counter-hegemonic memory culture emphasises the negative aspects of FRELIMO rule and also questions the historical achievement of the two founding figures. Names of international freedom fighters, statesmen and theorists primarily from the left of the political spectrum (Karl Marx, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il-Sung, Julius Nyerere, Amílcar Cabral, Ahmed Sékou Touré etc.) used as street names also underline the socialist heritage of FRELIMO and "its" state. In addition, the state presidents and the governments, which have always been formed by FRELIMO since independence despite multiparty elections, stand as one-sided versions of history. FRELIMO has a monopoly on steering the memory culture in "their" state. Conversely, this means that competing memories are often ignored or neglected. The consequence is a split in memory culture. This becomes most obvious through the fact that RENAMO leaders, for example, keep a symbolic distance from state institutions e.g. by regularly refusing to take part in state festivities such as Independence Day on June 25 (Azevedo-Harman 2015: 145). Clear parallels emerge here with another former Portuguese colony, Angola, where the former independence movements that transformed into political parties and became opponents in the civil war, MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* or People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and UNITA (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* or National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), also nourish competing memories. The UNITA rejects the Angolan state as not its own, since it was founded by the MPLA and is still dominated by it. Therefore, with respect to Mozambique one can ask to what extent

opposing memories have a share in the fresh outbreak of violence from the perspective of the population and how the experience of new violence changes memories.

At the same time, there are also discussions within FRELIMO who should be remembered and how (Igreja 2013; Sumich 2012). The legitimisation of the claim to power – both politically and from a memory culture perspective – is also derived from history: Anti-colonial liberation struggle, resistance against apartheid and self-determined national development serve as a backdrop on which to project the future. The example shows that practices of memory provide “orientation in the present for the purpose of acting in the future” [own translation] (Welzer 2010). The academic debate therefore coined the term “historical authenticity”. It describes the “authorisation of the past for the future” [own translation] (Rehling/Paulmann 2016: 100), and it plays an essential role as a bridge from the past via the present towards the future: What matters is which memories are perceived as “authentic” by the recipients or are constructed as such by providers of memory. Against this background, one can ask how conflicts of interpretation or “wars of memory” (Welzer 2007) are waged, to what extent they have a divisive impact on society (cf. Assmann 2013) and whether they fuel or even trigger violent conflicts such as the current “proto-war”. In the case of Mozambique it has so far remained unclear which memories are proclaimed “authentic” or are rejected by which actors or segments of the population. There is also little insight so far into the current memory culture of the founding figures of postcolonial Mozambique and into how it is challenged; existing studies are of a rather cursory nature and focus on elites (Igreja 2013). The conflict between FRELIMO and RENAMO makes clear that an investigation is necessary into whether and how memory cultures change under the current outbreak of violence and how shared memory cultures could perhaps be rendered fruitful for national integration e.g. by consciously using ambivalence as a resource in projects or national processes for reconciliation (cf. Christophe 2014: 8).

#### **4.3 Added Value and Necessity of Reckoning with the Past from a Memory Culture Perspective**

A series of approaches are conceivable that can make a contribution to reckoning with the past from a memory culture perspective. They include (1) research, (2) institution building and (3) media work, which will subsequently be discussed in the report.

##### *(1) Research*

With respect to interpretation patterns of memory culture, two levels are of central importance with regard to Mozambique and need to be taken into account. On the one hand, “specific narratives” refer to concrete events that occurred in certain places at certain times. By contrast, “narrative templates” are of a more fundamental nature, as they designate more general, more deep-seated meta-narratives (Wertsch/Karumidze 2009: 380). Governments, too, partly try to justify such meta-narratives through steered politics of memory. Yet, in a country divided along memory cultures such as Mozam-

bique, current narrative templates and specific narratives are characterised by considerable fractures. An overdue disclosure and analysis of these fractures would help to enquire into the conditions for an enhanced national integration of memory cultures, also in practical peace and reconciliation work, and to point out paths for peacefully dealing with conflict through an accommodation between memory cultures. In general and also in Mozambique in particular, it is not possible to write an “objective” history of the memory of political founding figures. However, different modalities of remembering the founding personalities of independent Mozambique with respect to their impact on societal polarisation or unity can be pointed out and approached, that is to say: negotiated (Erl 2008: 6–7; cf. also Wertsch 2012).

A strong memory culture with (largely) shared meta-narratives could represent an essential resource for successful nation-building – understood here as the identification of the population with the nation as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1999) across ethnic, religious and social boundaries. For such a culture can serve as a common point of reference for a strengthened national identity. On the other hand, however, ambivalence, i.e. the conscious manoeuvring around a topic without clearly taking up a position, can also be a resource for national understanding between memory cultures (Christophe 2014: 8). While it is frequently the government that – such as in Mozambique – attempts “top-down” nation-building, it often faces “bottom-up” processes initiated from the ranks of the population and corresponding memories, narratives and traditions that can contribute to nation-building in their own way (Kohl 2012). Not only the official production of memory needs to be examined, but especially the reception and the negotiation of such offers by the population as well as the construction of counter-hegemonic narratives. For the reception of different versions of memory culture on offer is still a frequently neglected topic (Christophe 2014: 8–9; cf. also e.g. Arenas 1998; Rodgers 2007). It would thus be important to learn more not only on narrative templates (Wertsch/Karumidze 2009) and specific narratives of the memory culture in Mozambique but also on the reception of different versions of memory culture regarding Mozambican political founding figures offered by different providers. In this way, “bottom-up” reconciliation work could take a practical form, and the conflicts could be transformed and harnessed. In particular the Mozambican state and FRELIMO, which controls it, have tried to distinguish themselves as the main producers offering interpretations of memory culture since independence in 1975. Thanks to its position of state power, FRELIMO can prominently place its heroes, its *lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora), its narratives, be it in the form of monuments, street names, squares, bridges, official institutions or historical images conveyed through various media. Counter-narratives stem from the ranks of RENAMO, among others, and are mainly passed on orally – which is no surprise given a literacy rate of just below 60% (UNDP 2016: 233). So far, RENAMO has lacked the power to also materially place its versions of memory culture (cf. Igreja 2013: 335). All in all, however, it is unknown how Mozambicans position themselves towards institutionalised objects of memory culture, whether, for instance, they share this offer, reject it or adopt it in a modified form.

## (2) *Institution Building*

It is a promising approach to render ambivalent memory fruitful for peacefully dealing with the conflict and thus for national integration through the creation of institutions. Lewis A. Coser (1956) already pointed out that social conflicts drive institution building forward. Conversely, institutions are important for creating moderated forms of memory culture reconciliation work so that conflicts, once addressed, can be moderated, accompanied and structured.

Transferred to the present context, this means that social conflicts *can* contribute to the consolidation and convergence of Mozambican society or to the further integration of the Mozambican nation, provided that they are negotiated. Moreover, in this context, the argument by Marita Sturken (1997) is relevant that conflicts lead to ambivalent forms of remembering that are open to interpretation. Sturken generally considers them as indicators for the emergence of a democratic and plural (i.e. the equal coexistence of different objects of) memory.

So-called truth and reconciliation commissions at different levels (national, regional, local etc.) can help contribute to a sustainable reckoning with the past. Realistically, it also must be said that the political constellations have so far been unfavourable to such an endeavour. An open and inclusive reckoning with the past would, however, still make sense.

In fact, empirical studies on Sierra Leone and South Africa (z.B. Sesay 2007; Clark 2012), among others, suggest that truth commissions and the articulation of transverse narrations taking place there can be valuable for national reconciliation under certain conditions. With respect to the South African truth and reconciliation commission, for example, Janine Natalya reaches the conclusion that:

“while TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] truths may be healing for some victims, the supposedly cathartic effects of truth-telling should not be overemphasized. It is the overall process and the extent to which victims’ needs are given priority that are critical to the question of whether truth is healing.” (Clark 2012: 202)

Moreover, she emphasises the necessity of embedding such commissions in society. For:

“TRCs are temporary bodies with limited resources and the pressures they face are immense. Yet, if they are disconnected from victims and local communities, and if the truths that they establish have little resonance at the grassroots level, an important dimension of the possible relationship between truth and reconciliation will remain underexplored.” (Clark 2012: 202)

She considers it very significant that willingness, openness and spaces must be present, not only in the political sphere, in order to implement recommendations issued by truth and reconciliation commissions:

“[W]hile it is ultimately the government of the day that decides whether or not to implement a TRC’s recommendations, the responsibility of dealing with the truth established lies not just with those who are in power but more broadly with society as a whole.” (Clark 2012: 203)

Other studies, too, point to the necessity of a fundamental willingness in society to deal with the past conflict. For instance, Amadu Sesay sums up the insights from the activity of the truth and reconciliation commission in Sierra Leone as follows:

“[...] the success of a TRC will depend to a large extent on whether it is able to address the background conditions that led to the hostilities on the one hand, and on the other, its ability to put in place mechanisms that will effect qualitative changes to the post conflict political and social conditions of the population in particular and the country in general.” (Sesay 2007: 46)

Moreover, he draws attention to compensation for suffered injustices and the capacity of the political decision makers to deliver them, without which, according to him, a lasting reconciliation can hardly be achieved:

“[...] truth-telling as a means of healing the wounds of the past and coping with the future, without socio-economic empowerment is ephemeral; a mere short-term palliative that does not address substantive and long-term needs in the post conflict dispensation.” (Sesay 2007: 46)

The establishment of courts as an expression of a transitional justice system, as occurred in Rwanda, Sierra Leone and South Africa, among others, has also turned out to be an albeit limited means for reckoning with past violent conflicts. Fidelma Donlon quotes a quantitative study according to which the large majority of the inhabitants of Sierra Leone and Liberia were satisfied with the work of the Sierra Leonean transitional justice system and regarded criminal prosecution and the rule of law as guaranteed (Donlon 2013: 873–74). It is of paramount importance to guarantee a solid and permanent financing of the transitional justice system, for which not only the national government but also the UN and bilateral donor countries have to be responsible (Donlon 2013: 872–873). This must be accompanied by guaranteed sufficient staffing in order to ensure the court’s ability to work (Barria/Roper 2005: 364). However, especially the example of Rwanda makes the limits of transitional justice clear, as the court did not manage to charge the sitting president, who is accused of being implicated in the atrocities (Morrill 2012).

“Bottom-up” institutions administering justice at the local level can also contribute to restoring reconciliation and justice. The Rwandan Gacaca are a well-known example of this. They are a system of community-based jurisdiction that is to be partly based on local traditions. The government introduced the Gacaca after the genocide. The result of these institutions was not:

“‘a collective remembering’ or ‘truth’ in the face of the restrictive dominant [governmental] narrative of history in Rwanda, but rather, [...] a fight against forgetting and a reminder of constant contestation.” (Doughty 2011: 243)

The mode of operation of these institutions is assessed as rather ambivalent by Kristin C. Doughty:

“Overall, gacaca sessions did not simply create restorative harmony, nor did they simply deepen a single division between Hutu and Tutsi. The depth of fractures revealed the ongoing anger, pain, and frustration on all sides that the mediation discourse struggled to accommodate and overcome.” (Doughty 2011: 243)



Despite all merits of the Gacaca that are reflected in the positive public opinion of Rwanda, they have also been criticised in various ways. These points of criticism have to be taken into consideration when implementing local jurisdiction in future. Frequently stated problems were the traumatic burden for witnesses, the retroactive application of laws, the lack of rights for the accused, the insufficient participation of local communities in the creation of Gacaca, the lack of tribunals against political leaders, the fact that even Gacaca judges were sometimes implicated in the genocide, corruption and favouritism in the courts as well as a lack of victim and witness protection (Brehm et al. 2014: 338).

The conflict between the FRELIMO-led government and RENAMO shows that a reckoning with the past is an urgent necessity. The most recent outbreaks of violence in October 2017 in the north of Mozambique (Morier-Genoud 2017b; Vines 2017) not only point to the latent potential for violence in the country. Violence is still perceived as a legitimate means of asserting interests – also because a democratic culture exists only on the surface, existing institutions are sometimes met with little trust or institutions that might be able to mediate in conflicts are lacking. The attack by suspected Islamists also has to be viewed against this background. It is true that only a small group launched the attack. However, the policies of the FRELIMO central government in the capital, which has a strong Christian character and is located in the far south, towards the Muslims in the north have never been part of a public discussion. Since FRELIMO took power in 1975, Islam was initially suppressed, just like other religions (including Christianity). That Samora Machel entered a mosque with his shoes on or that the government insisted, in the name of their paradigm of progress, on building pigsties also in predominantly Muslim regions has become deeply engraved in many Muslims' minds (Morier-Genoud 2017b). It would thus make all the more sense to initiate an institutionalised “bottom-up” way of reckoning with the past, in order to bring those Mozambicans on board who feel marginalised, socially and in terms of their memory culture, and in order to thus permanently strengthen cohesion at the state and national level.

### (3) *Media*

In countries of the postcolonial Global South, such as Mozambique, memory is often much more strongly oriented towards the oral, especially outside the urban centres and beyond the upper and middle classes. The print media sector is relatively weak, and many Mozambicans only have limited access to print publications. To a certain extent, schools and school books represent an exception as regards access to print media, provided that there are sufficient financial resources for teaching materials available in the families. As Elisabete Azevedo-Harman (2015: 148) remarks, the internet, and with it social networks, have provided the country with a new, also critical medium.

There are hardly any studies for Mozambique on the importance of oral memory that specifically inquire, beyond colonial memories or memories of the war of independence, about current memory cultures, for example revolving around the political founding figures and their relevance for the future development of the country (see e.g. Igreja 2008).

Concretely, different media formats (such as educational media or school lessons, for example) could broach the issue of diverging memories – going beyond the already discussed academic investigation of the diverse memory cultures – and thus initiate a discussion. This should by no means only deal with the main protagonists of the struggle for independence. Rather, histories of suffering and victimhood by people affected in different segments of the population should be given centre stage in reckoning with the violent conflicts. Here it can be discussed how immediate memories of events and actors relate to meta-narratives, whether and to what extent authenticity is attributed to them or denied, what has so far been passed on in oral and written form (or not – and why) and which visions for the future are derived from the memories. Quite practically, it could also be negotiated, among other things, how memories can enter into largely accepted toponymic references. What is important in such a media-related (and other) form of reckoning with the past, is (1) not to contrapose “good” and “bad”, (2) to give the floor to different groups of actors, (3) to provide much space for emotions and empathy and (4) to make historical and socio-political contextualisations possible (Bull/Hansen 2016: 399).

Furthermore, employing mixed school book commissions could be envisioned in order to develop new teaching materials that provide space for the heterogeneous interpretations of history in Mozambique and that could draw on related experiences at the international level (see for example Strobel 2014). The educational researcher Falk Pingel offers the positive example of the development of an Israeli-Palestinian school book that tries to juxtapose Israeli and Palestinian narratives of memory and history instead of harmonising them in order to prompt discussions with the goal of reconciliation:

“On one hand, the group of teachers and university historians working in the project recognizes that each side has its own narrative that is firmly anchored in a long history and strongly linked to a set of national feelings, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions that cannot be neglected. On the other hand, each side tries to understand the other’s narrative, to discuss both narratives, and to subject both versions to scientific scrutiny. Critical questioning of the other’s interpretation involves being critical of oneself. Truth turns out to be a communication process. Thus, the material consists of two “national” narratives presented on the left and right side of a double page, leaving blank space in between where teachers and students can write down their own interpretation and comments.” (Pingel 2008: 189)

According to Pingel, the underlying assumption is “on one hand, the duality of the narrative as the point of departure, but, on the other hand, of encouraging recognition between each group as a legitimate bearer of opposed narratives.” (Pingel 2008: 189). Another example is afforded by the German-Polish school book commission set up in 1970 – which at the same time illustrates that developing school books is very time-consuming and can take up several years to decades (Pingel 2008: 190; Strobel 2014). Especially in countries such as Rwanda or Bosnia and Herzegovina in which history and memory are strongly contested and politicised, the development of new educational media is frequently characterised by blockades and requires a sustained, sensitive approach (Pingel 2008: 185, 187–188, 192–193).

The umbrella organisation “European Association of History Educators” (EUROCLIO), which was founded at the request of the Council of Europe in 1993 and which, by its own account, brings together more than seventy not only European pedagogical organisations

from the areas of history, cultural heritage and political education, can also serve as a role model. EUROCLIO, which works together with the German Körber Foundation and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Brunswick,

“supports the development of responsible and innovative history, citizenship and heritage education by promoting critical thinking, multi-perspectivity, mutual respect, and the inclusion of controversial issues. The Association advocates a sound use of history and heritage education towards the building and deepening of democratic societies, connecting professionals across boundaries of communities, countries, ethnicities and religions.”<sup>3</sup>

UNESCO has also been dedicating itself to the revision of educational media for a long time and has summed up its expertise on this field in a guidebook (Pingel 2010). UNESCO emphasises that school books (and other educational media) can play a very central role for peace and reconciliation:

“Faced with formerly unknown violence and challenged by the emergence of pluralistic political structures, international intervention, elements of civil society grassroots work and domestic reconstruction policy often lead to a mixture of tools for pacification and reconciliation in which textbook revision is only one, but still an important, aspect.” (Pingel 2010: 25)

For, as the guidebook emphasises:

“The role of textbook revision has to be placed into the wider framework of transitional justice and reconciliation measures such as trials, truth commissions, and remembrance ceremonies.” (Pingel 2010: 5).

In summary, we can conclude: Different, discrepant memories coexist in Mozambique. Processing and negotiating these different strands of memory and historical narratives can support an overall pacification of society in Mozambique and pave the way for a lasting reconciliation. For only if the heterogeneous views and perspectives of memory, and likewise the needs and demands of large segments of the Mozambican population, are included in the projection of the nation and its joint future can a peaceful society be realised that is more inclusive with respect to memory culture. Processing memory is to the benefit of developing perspectives for the future: Visions of the future (Welzer 2010) form a promising teleological dimension of national integration with respect to memory culture in Mozambique. An effective reckoning with the past in Mozambique should therefore link memory cultures and memories of the future to matters of societal integration and the role of political founding figures in postcolonial Mozambique. Memory thus structures and predisposes future developments to a certain extent.

3 <https://euroclio.eu/who-we-are>; 18.12.2017.

## **5. Conclusion: How It Could Be Done Better**

As the previous deliberations make clear, a strategy of avoiding an open and constructive way of dealing with the civil war between the government formed by FRELIMO and the insurgent RENAMO contributed to a medium-term pacification of Mozambique, but in the long term it presumably led to the fresh outbreak of the violent conflict in 2012. While it is a valid observation that political and economic imbalances are essential root causes for the conflict, they are accompanied by fundamental rifts in memory culture that divide not only the supporters of FRELIMO and RENAMO but the entire society and nation. Due to short-sighted pragmatic considerations in the mid-nineties, a national reconciliation process involving not only the elites and/or a transitional justice system (as e.g. in neighbouring South Africa, Clark 2012) was not established. The consequences were widespread distrust and the mutual negation of historical narratives and memory cultures. Especially the representatives of the two big parties stubbornly stick to their perceptions of history and memory and to their images of the political opponent as an enemy and have so far not or hardly been ready for a mutual rapprochement. Pro forma, FRELIMO still feels committed to the idea of modernisation and to national unity, and it sees itself in a strengthened position – through partly manipulated election results. It wants to defend its power, views itself as “state party” and understands the Mozambican state as its oeuvre, its property. Due to the brutal prosecution of the civil war by the insurgents, and due to the fact that their leadership does not hail from the environs of the capital region, RENAMO is treated condescendingly by FRELIMO. By contrast, RENAMO under its long-term leader, who is also not very democratically-minded and also oriented towards power strategies and the (rentier) economy, casts itself as a champion of democracy and anti-Marxism that wants to curb the authoritarian, selfish behaviour of the former unity party FRELIMO. The relationship between the two parties is characterised by a deep mistrust. The antagonistic images of the self and the enemy shape the contrasting memories.

Especially now that Mozambique finds itself in a profound economic and fiscal crisis and the country is looking for funds to fill the financial gaps after the withdrawal of most of the international donor countries and institutions (with the exception of China) in order to keep civil servants happy and central services such as water and power supply running, the fourteen donors of direct budgetary aid for Mozambique as well as central bilateral donor countries such as Germany as the most important donor in the area of basic and vocational education (Deutsche Botschaft Maputo 2017) would have some leverage to lobby both conflict parties over a profound reconciliation – especially beyond the political elite. They could demand concrete peacebuilding measures, such as establishing a truth and reconciliation commission or joint commissions for revising and developing new educational media or carrying out studies and media-pedagogical projects and support their implementation. Especially German development cooperation – and here in particular the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, German Corporation for International Cooperation) with its expertise in the area of education and conflict management and the Federal Foreign Office as a sponsor of projects in the area of culture, but also German non-governmental organisations such as

the World Peace Service or the Forum Civil Peace Service – could get involved in the framework outlined, or could enhance existing engagements with new projects in order to make an important contribution to a reckoning with the past from a memory culture perspective. In addition, alliances such as EUROCLIO, whose members include the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research and the Körber Foundation, as well as supranational institutions such as UNESCO have expertise in the area of systematically revising educational media in order to contribute to a reckoning with the past from a memory culture perspective.

Perhaps only a change in the RENAMO leadership and a generational change within FRELIMO will lead not only to a lasting resolution of the current conflict, but also to a reckoning with the past and a reconciliation of memory cultures. This would have to include large parts of the population and the media. In order to be able to resolve the conflict sustainably, in the sense of inclusive nation-building that fosters trust working with memory cultures, it is foremost necessary for research and also the media to pay attention to which different narratives of memory culture circulate within the population, how they can constructively be negotiated in public – of course, without overlooking and ignoring demands for judicial justice and for reckoning with the atrocities committed in the civil war.

In view of the refusal up to now of the leaderships of both political organisations to (also) approach each other at this level, it would be necessary for the fourteen donors of direct budgetary aid and central bilateral donor countries such as Germany, but also local civil society, to work towards convincing the Mozambican government of the necessity not only of a political opening but also of a lasting reconciliation, reaching beyond intellectual and political elites. A central condition for this is that such debates also take place in the media that are accessible to the bulk of the Mozambicans, also and especially in the rural areas outside the few big cities; also via radio, TV, but also in social networks – less in print publications that experience has shown to be geographically and socially limited in their reach. All this is a long process that will not deliver the short-term and quickly measurable results that are often envisioned by donors. By contrast, “bottom-up” oriented projects of peace and reconciliation work can deliver important impetus and insight in order to abet a permanent inclusion in terms of memory culture and thus peace and reconciliation.

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